

visited only at certain seasons by indispensable law, such as bound the Jews. The chief temple stood in the city of Balck till the seventh century, when, on persecution by the Mahomedans, the followers of the Magi fled to Carmania—whither, no doubt, they carried their arts and their taste—and raised another temple. But you see that their worship was purer than that of Egypt; and it is not unreasonable thence to argue that their ecclesiastical buildings were less the subject of gross ideas. Their religion flourished among the Parthians, Bactrians, Chorasmians, Sacans, Medes, and other nations: from this we may guess somewhat at the temple architecture—in fact, the architecture of these nations; for it is evident that the grandest efforts of the art have been in all ages dedicated to the purposes of religion, from the time of Osiris to that of the Divine Redeemer. The Indians, whose original doctrines appear to have been borrowed from Zoroaster, raised in old time many curious and striking edifices, which appear to be better understood by inspection of drawings than from description; but they possess, many of them, a bold and swelling outline—perhaps, in some, a disproportionate width, and, besides, a singular elaboration of detail—not uncommon among semibarbarous nations. There is also a great massiveness, even heaviness, about them which we have found in the buildings of other Pagan nations; whence we can only suppose that the taste of the Indians was most affected by their lifeless creed. This heaviness is striking in Pagan architecture, while the Christian Gothic has the very opposite characteristic. Concerning early Arabian taste—to leave, at present, the Saracenic—there is little to be said: it is probable there was little of it, so far as architecture is concerned. The religion of the Arabs was Chaldean: they cultivated poetry, possessed a brilliant and versatile imagination, and supported a good moral doctrine.

It is impossible here to investigate the taste of the Phœnicians or of the Ethiopians; but there was nothing in either very dissimilar from that of contemporary nations. In fact, we find the extraordinary and grotesque religion of all these ancient nations to have greatly shackled their arts, and to have given them, with a taste for pomp and grandeur, a sort of necessary absurdity of purpose. The Jews were more ancient than all; but from their religion it was necessary to reserve them to this place, on account of certain remarks generally applied to the rest, in which they would not be included. Being for many centuries a pastoral and nomad race, they appear to have had little opportunity either for the acquisition or the display of taste. The mention of their name immediately suggests the Temple of Solomon. The king's predominant taste, whether or not suggested originally by a far higher feeling, was, according to oriental nature, for magnificence; and we find that he built his own palaces with a profusion and splendour of ornament little inferior to that displayed in the Temple. That building seems not to have been striking either with respect to its proportion or its size: it was somewhat Egyptian, and the adornments of it were Tyrian. We may hence assert, while, in the latter remark, the taste in art of the Tyrians is suggested, that native taste was but little among the Jews, and that they were in respect of taste at all, far behind either Egypt or Assyria. They had always, however, great natural genius, and their want of taste arose rather from their long pastoral habits above referred to, than from any natural incapacity. Time afterwards did for them, and now does, more than he has done for any other race. In our days, the leaders of taste in several arts, of which we will only instance music, are Jews. Of their ancient literature it may be remarked, that besides its inspired character, it affords a perfect model of sublimity and power, not to speak of wisdom and grace: numberless instances might be brought forward to prove this, but it is sufficient to point to the description of the war-horse in the book of Job.

We have now traced the varieties of taste among the earliest nations of the world: we have seen that the Egyptians loved the huge and massive and heavy; that the Assyrian taste was similar; that the Persians, Jews, &c. favoured the more showy and magnificent; we have found it grand in all. Hitherto, then, the charac-

teristic of taste in art has been GRANDEUR. But in none have we found the pure, the chaste. We ask for it: the Sphinx and the winged bull shake their heads, but being pressed, nod assented to Greece. It is to Greece, then, in order that we may add to the taste we have already acquired that purity which is indispensable to a right taste—it is to Greece that we must sail.*

H. T. BRAITHWAITE.

THE GENEALOGY OF THE FINE ARTS.†

A common error of painters and sculptors is, to take those subjects for illustration that have most powerfully affected them, or that they deem most beautiful in history or fiction, without considering whether painting or sculpture be a fit vehicle for conveying them, or whether the subject be at all adapted to the art. Many first-rate subjects, from which perfect poems have been, or might be, formed, have no pictorial elements in them. A picture I once saw, attributed, I know not how justly, to Fuseli, of Hamlet and the Ghost, an utter failure in effect, evidently owed its failure to this cause. The error of the artist lay in his choice of subject. There was nothing in it, or to speak with precision, not sufficient in it, to make a picture.

If the view of art I have exhibited be correct, it will not be uninteresting to inquire into its present state, and how far its resources are drawn upon in the great work of general education.

A good deal of what is either baseless or unintelligible, has been written and spoken on the question of the comparative merit of the old and modern masters in art, particularly of painting and sculpture. The arts, I believe, are progressing; we are in advance of our predecessors upon the whole; yet the march has been a fluctuating, not an uniform one. To establish the truth of this, it is not necessary for us to prove that the present race of artists in England or Europe, are superior to any past one. Still, I believe, it could be shown, that we, in England, have men who, in their respective departments, were never surpassed, if equalled. Certainly there is no gulph between us and the excellence of the old masters, which we moderns cannot pass. To maintain the contrary is unphilosophical and absurd. The monopoly of the grand historical subjects, which the first great masters of Italy naturally made, gave them a great advantage over all subsequent ones. It is possible that the best conceptions of many such subjects may have been attained at once; and though an after artist might be capable, on any one of these subjects, of equalling his predecessor, yet, if he could not go beyond him, he had done nothing,—the first work would always hold its place. I have no doubt that the grandest possible conceptions of some of the most celebrated subjects of sacred or profane history, have been thus arrived at: perhaps the "Transfiguration of Raphael," for instance, the "Last Judgment" of Michaelangelo, or the "Last Supper" of Da Vinci. If so, if no artist can go beyond them, there can be no other "Transfiguration," or "Last Judgment," or "Last Supper," of any value to art. In other subjects of painting, or sculpture, landscape, single figures, or portraiture, there is ever room for new competitors; and there, on even ground, the modern master may contend with the ancient. About the colour of the old masters, we can say little. The pictures having gone through so many transmutations, have been so acted upon by time, weather, climate, and other destructive agents, that probably all original hue is in most instances lost.

With respect to criticism: we now look at works of art more æsthetically, and less technically, than we formerly did, and so far have moved in a right direction. A work should be examined with respect to every quality, ere we can estimate truly: if we look at technicalities alone, we bribe genius to become mechanical; if we look æsthetically alone we become mere theorists, and are apt to lose sight of all rule and principle. So far we have advanced; but the necessity for applying art to the purposes of general education and refinement, as I intimated in my introductory remarks, and even its right to a place in the course of study which self-teaching

men adopt, is scarcely recognised at all. Those elements and principles which constitute a pure taste in art, where are they taught? What has been done to facilitate the study of the fine arts, and to cultivate the natural perception of, and feeling for, the beautiful? While every means has been used for the advancement of general knowledge, and the spread of scientific lore, among workmen and others, by schools, reading-rooms, libraries, and so forth, what has been done for the advancement and refinement of public taste? London, I know, has of late years witnessed the founding of professorships of painting and architecture, and we have a Government school of design, besides our metropolitan and provincial exhibitions; but we want a system of general instruction in the leading principles of art. We want cheap prints as well as cheap maps and books: we have low priced ones, but not good ones;—we have cheap editions of literature, why not cheap casts and engravings to give the people generally some idea of the great achievements of art? Fine art has hitherto been considered as ground too sacred for the feet of the million, as if there were an elect of taste who could alone appreciate and enjoy the beautiful; and while the upper classes would have his "thrice-winnowed" for their use, they neglect to provide the means of assisting the humbler classes to their natural and rightful pleasures;—to the participation in those enjoyments which were designed by a bountiful Creator for all. Education, to be fully efficient and complete,—nay, to be even worthy of the name—must correct this; scatter every where the seeds of a correct taste in art, and diffuse its sublime influence universally.*

Whilst the inspirations of Shakespeare, Tasso, and Goethe, are rooted in the very depths of feeling, and refine and exalt the soul,—while music is felt by the most obtuse,—what is the power of the artist and architect? They are magicians also, but their wands are broken. It must be mainly owing to an erroneous view of art, and a false reception of it, that it has hitherto comparatively failed in its object. The works of Phidias are as much adapted to the refinement and improvement of the mind as those of Homer, and would shed as much influence on the present generation, as they did on the public of Athens, if properly studied. Why should not Palladio, Raphael, and Michaelangelo, exert an influence on society at large, as well as the popular novelists and poets? Why should not works of art be made the subject of general education? Art fails in its mission if not felt and understood by all. Works of art have a revelation to the untutored soul of the peasant as well as to the cultivated intellect of the prince. The beautiful was created for all, and all men have faculties to feel and appreciate its influence.

But our towns and cities have not been built in accordance with these views: think of the immense districts of some of our larger towns, where, while nature is of necessity excluded, art has not been called upon to contribute a single charm!

But the deficiency is not confined to the lower classes.—The upper ranks are wanting. How many persons filling the chief offices of the state, and moving in the highest walks of literature, are comparatively ignorant of the principles of art? How many priding in the utmost polish of manners, while neglecting the most powerful agent of refinement? How many young ladies, who think, when they have added to the accomplishments of singing, dancing, and music, that of being able servilely to copy a drawing, that they have attained to the beau ideal of humanity? Now, I venture to assert, that a knowledge of art, and an appreciation of the beautiful, are qualifications peculiarly adapted to the structure of the female mind, and as necessary to the development of the higher qualities of the sex—to the cultivation of the entire woman, as to the full nature and capabilities of man. Neither are women without the faculties for practice. Females have exhibited artistic talent in all ages. Cresilla, a Grecian sculptress, was among the competitors who vied in decorating the temple of Diana at Ephesus; and such was the result of the competition, that her works

* To be continued.

† See page 579, ante.

* The efforts of the Art-Union of London in this respect must not be forgotten.